

Merry Christmas!

BY LOUISE M. ALCOTT.

In the hush of early morning,
When the red burns through the gray,
And the wintry world lies waiting
For the glory of the day—
Then we hear a fitful rustling
Just without upon the stair;
See two small white phantoms coming,
Catch the gleam of golden hair.

Are they Christmas fairies stealing
Rows of little socks to fill?
Are they angels floating hither
With their message of good will?
What sweet spell are those elves weaving,
As like larks they chirp and sing?
Are these palms of peace from heaven
That those lovely spirits bring?

Rosy feet upon the threshold,
Eager faces peeping through,
With the first red ray of sunshine,
Chanting cherubs come in view;
Mistletoe and gleaming holly,
Symbols of a blessed day,
In their chubby hands they carry,
Streaming all along the way.

Well we know them, never weary,
Of this innocent surprise,
Waiting, watching, listening always
With full hearts and tender eyes;
While our little household angels,
White and golden in the sun,
Greet us with the sweet old welcome,
"Merry Christmas, every one!"

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A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 23, 1893.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The silvery greeting heard on every hand this day we wish to repeat as our own glad word to all our readers. Let us be merry and glad to-day. Let every heart beat lightly. Let joy and brightness fill every home and every place.

But let us this day think of the real meaning of this holy anniversary, and be careful lest amid the hilarity and glad effervescence we forget how profound and far-reaching were the thoughts of God which gave us this joyous day. The Babe of Bethlehem whose birth we celebrate was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." And so long ago did the gift and coming of Jesus enter into the thought of God that he is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The birth of Jesus means the supreme love of God for the fallen and lost world of mankind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let us, then, with glad hearts and cheerful songs celebrate the day, but especially with gratitude and love for the unspeakable riches of mercy and grace which had come to us with the gift of Jesus.

TWO CHRISTMAS STORIES.

BY SAMUEL GREGORY.

"When Jesus was born."—*Matt. ii. 1.*

"THE YEAR OF OUR LORD."

If you read books of history you notice that dates are often given with letters attached to them. The letters are B.C. and A.D. I need not tell you what these letters mean; but tell me why events are recorded as happening "before Christ," or, "in the year of our Lord"? It is because the birth of Jesus makes such a difference to all mankind that time began to be reckoned in a fresh way—it was a new chapter in the history of the world that opened "when Jesus was born."

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS' SONG.

On the night that Jesus was born some shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. They were good men and were often sad because they lived in wicked times when God did not seem to be so near to their nation as in the days of their fathers, and perhaps on that Christmas night the shepherds were talking of these things, when suddenly there came a soft, golden light, as if a door of heaven had suddenly opened there in that dark field, and an angel told them that God had sent a Saviour of the world. Then a multitude of angels sang in chorus of God's love and goodwill to men.

THE WISE MEN AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

Somewhere about that time some wise men who, like our astronomers, watched the stars, saw a wonderful light in the heavens. These men lived in Persia, India or some eastern land far away from Bethlehem. They, too, were good men, who wanted to find God and to see better days among their fellows, and they knew that God had promised to send a Messenger from Heaven. Now, as they watched this strange star God led them to think that it was a sign that his Messenger had come. The wise men loaded their camels with food and with presents, and started on a long journey till they came to Bethlehem to where Jesus was born.

JESUS IS EVERYBODY'S SAVIOUR.

The shepherds and the wise men were of different nations and different religions, of different occupations and different education—as different, perhaps, as a Chinese astronomer and a Yorkshire shepherd are from each other. I cannot imagine a greater contrast than that between these two kinds of men who came to the cradle of the infant Jesus.

It was as if God wanted to show Jesus is to be the Saviour of everybody. You know that in many things people are very much alike. They are all tempted to sin against God. They all have sorrow and sadness.

JESUS MAKES ALL MEN BROTHERS.

Before Jesus was born, and in lands where men have not learned the love of Jesus, how different it has always been! It is Christians who have set the slaves free. It is Christians who have tried to make wretched men who steal and commit crime, better men. It is Christians who have built hospitals for sick people. It is Christians who have put up orphanages to shelter those who have no father or mother to care for them. It is Christians who have sent missionaries to dark lands to give them light and help. It is Christians who have tried to put an end to war and cause nations to live in peace.

Now, if we love Jesus that love will make us not only careful to do right, but kind to all about us. We shall speak gently, as he did, and help others as he did. It is that which makes us do out-of-the-way kindnesses at Christmas time. Families meet together. Christmas gifts are sent to the poor. All sorts of good wishes and good gifts are scattered freely in honour of Christ's birthday, in order that we may learn that kindness is the duty of all who love Christ. Christmas comes to remind us that we are all brothers, and must help one another always in all the ways we are able to help. It ought to be always Christmas in this, that we are always acting as if it were more blessed to give than to receive.

THE HOMAGE OF THE SHEPHERDS AND THE WISE MEN.

But let us call to mind out of the two old Christmas stories what the shepherds and the wise men did when they came to Jesus. The shepherds were poor men and had nothing to give. They looked on the little babe lying in the manger and spoke good words of God's love. Then they went out to tell their friends what great things God had promised and done. The wise men (who came to Bethlehem a little later, when Mary had removed to a house in that little town) opened the packs on their camels and gave beautiful things—gold and frankincense and myrrh—as if they were before the throne of a great king. They, too, spoke good words of God, and went back to tell out his praises among their people.

LOVE GIFTS TO JESUS.

Now, all who love Jesus must do the best they can to show their love. During Christmas time people send love messages all over the world. The poor postmen groan along under heavy bags, and come with the letters two hours late. It is hard work, but they know that every house will give them a Christmas-box, except, perhaps, the house where "Mr. Scrooge" lives. Everybody sends love messages to friends. Emigrants afar off, who brush the tears away when they think about old home gatherings; soldier lads under the palm trees of India; sailors tossing on the deep blue sea; children who jump to know that it is Christmas morning; grandfathers and grandmothers who used to jump, but who sit still now and think of Christmas many years ago, all of them help to load the postman until he is like the camel who can't carry one straw more. But, as I said, he is sure to have his Christmas-box.

What is it that makes people glad to receive the gifts which are sent flying? Is it because the gifts are costly and beautiful? No! It is because they mean "love." Plenty of Christmas cards that only cost a farthing, and are coloured no better than panoramas of the Lord Mayor's show, are as welcome as if they were made of silk and satin, and drew out into long avenues full of angels, and had golden letters printed on them, simply from this fact that they mean "I think of you and I love you." People do not say, "How much did this card cost?" but, "How much love does it carry?"

In the same way God regards all good things that we do. Jesus once said that a poor widow, who gave ever so little, had really given more than the rich men of Jerusalem, in this that she gave all that she could spare. And you know how he said of a woman, "She hath done what she could." Never think that nothing but great things will please Jesus. All he wants is love and the best that love can do. If we are good and try to do right in little things, and are as kind as we can be to everybody, we are bestowing on Jesus more than gold and frankincense and myrrh.

A RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS STORY.

Let me tell you a Russian Christmas story.

There was a poor shoemaker named Martin, who lived in a Russian city. He lived in sorrow and loneliness until a good man so taught him of the love of Jesus, that Martin began to trust in and to love God. He read beautiful stories in the New Testament about the love of Jesus to everybody, and one day he read about that Pharisee named Simon, who once had Jesus for his guest, but who was not kind to Jesus. Martin thought of how he would have liked Jesus to come to his house, and while he sat thinking he fell asleep. He dreamed that the voice of Jesus spoke, and said, "Martin, look to-morrow in the street, for I am coming." In the morning the man said his prayers and sat to his work. At length he thought of the voice, and looked out into the street. A poor old man, who was shovelling snow from the doors, had to rest on his shovel, he was so feeble and so cold. So Martin put on the kettle, and made some tea, and, calling the snow-clearer in, said, "Here, warm yourself and drink this hot tea." After the old labourer had refreshed himself, Martin went on with his work, but looking into the street again he saw a poor woman leaning against the wall, trying to warmly wrap up a little crying child. Martin called her

in, gave her some soup, made her sit by his stove, and then found her an old coat to wrap the baby in. He saved her child from being frost-bitten, and as she went away she said, "May Christ bless you!" Martin had been working some time when he again looked into the street and saw an old woman with a basket of apples. A little ragged boy was trying to steal her apples, and the poor apple seller was struggling with and scolding the little ragamuffin. Martin rushed out and talked to them until the boy begged the old woman's pardon, and she forgave him for his naughtiness. What is more, the boy was so touched by Martin's kind words that he went off helping the apple-seller to carry her basket.

During the day, Martin often thought of the voice that said, "Look for me in the street, for I am coming!" He was sad to think that Christ never came along the street now as he used to do in Capernaum and Bethany. He lit his lamp, read his New Testament, and dozed off, when it seemed as if the same voice said, "Martin, you did not recognize me!" "Who?" said Martin. "I," said the voice; "That was I," and then like a cloud he saw the face of the snow-clearer appear for a moment and vanish. "And this is I," said the voice, and for a moment the faces of the woman and the child appeared and vanished. "And this is I," said the voice, and the faces of the old apple-woman and the boy smiled at him and vanished. Martin woke and wondered, and opening his New Testament he read, "I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in. Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me."

Then Martin understood that Christ had really come to him along the street that day, and that he had received Christ into his house.

JUST WHAT THE BEER-DRINKER PAYS FOR.

A BARREL of beer contains about five hundred glasses. The seller gives about eight dollars for it, and sells it for five cents per glass, or twenty-five dollars. His profit is two hundred and fifteen per cent. The drinker drops in ten times per day and takes his glass of beer; in fifty days he has consumed the five hundred glasses and paid twenty-five dollars therefor. What has he swallowed? Scientific men say that in the five hundred glasses of beer there were four hundred and sixty glasses of mere water, twenty-five glasses of pure alcohol, fifteen glasses of extracts and gums. So the beer-drinker has paid twenty-three dollars for four hundred and sixty glasses of water, and impure at that, which he could have had from the nearest spring for nothing, and pure as nature made it. He has had, in addition, twenty-five glasses of pure alcohol, which is a poison,—at enmity with every function of the system—no food nor heat producer. And besides all this, he has taken fifteen glasses of extract of malt, sugary matter, indigestible gums, etc.

Surely, there is no absurdity so absurd: To pay twenty-three dollars for four hundred and sixty glasses of impure water, when he could have it pure for nothing, and two dollars for forty glasses of poison and mostly indigestible drugs! But it pays the brewer and saloon-keeper to sell water, at two hundred and fifteen per cent. advance on all their trouble for barreling and bottling.

In view of the fact that a crisis of the greatest moment is upon our country, we repeat Mr. Wooley's impressive sermon with Mr. Bengough's equally impressive cuts, showing where the responsibility of the liquor traffic lies. We hope all our readers will seriously ponder this question; will, if they have any doubt about it, make their duty the subject of earnest prayer, and then, in the name of God, do their duty for their country and their kind on the first of January, by voting for the abolition of the liquor traffic—the "smashing," as Mr. Bengough calls it, "of the bottle which has for so long been put to our neighbour's lips."